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Cover Page Footnote

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"Promiscuous Smoking": Interpreting Gender and Tobacco Use in the Archaeological Record

Lauren J. Cook

Viewed as a social act, tobacco use is a rich area for archaeological inquiry. The act of tobacco consumption has historically conveyed meaning, communicating self-perceptions of class, ethnicity, and gender roles. Tobacco consumption has also resulted in the use and discard of material culture, often in large quantities, making it of particular interest to archaeologists. The examination of tobacco use as a field for the negotiation of gender roles in the late 19th and early 20th centuries provides an excellent basis for a critical examination of an "archaeology of gender." The constellation of meanings surrounding actions and motivations that emerges from the documentary record is at odds with the perception that has been fostered by present-day mass media. The use of tobacco-related material culture as "index artifacts" of gender is only possible if a reductive approach is employed, downplaying the influences of class, ethnicity, and regionalism, and ignoring change in behavior over time. The polyvocality of actions and material symbols surrounding smoking and the tendency of meanings to change over time are such that caution is required when relying on the material record alone to examine gender issues.

Considéré comme un acte social, l'usage du tabac constitue un riche domaine d'enquête archéologique. L'usage du tabac a toujours été chargé de sens, indiquant comment le fumeur se percevait sous le rapport de la classe sociale, de l'ethnicité et du sexe. L'usage du tabac a aussi entraîné l'utilisation et la mise au rebut de culture matérielle, souvent en grande quantité, ce qui le rend particulièrement intéressant pour l'archéologue. L'examen de l'usage du tabac comme domaine de négociation des rôles des sexes sur la fin du XIX^e siècle et au début du XX^e fournit une excellente base à un examen critique d'une «archéologie des sexes». La constellation de significations pour ce qui est des actes et motivations qui se dégagent des documents ne cadre pas avec la perception qu'entretiennent les médias d'aujourd'hui. L'emploi de la culture matérielle liée au tabac comme «artefacts indicatifs» du sexe n'est possible qu'avec une approche réductrice qui minore l'influence de la classe sociale, de l'ethnicité et du régionalisme et ne tient pas compte de l'évolution des comportements au cours du temps. La «polyvocalité» des actes et des symboles matériels qui entourent l'usage du tabac et la tendance des significations à changer avec le temps sont telles qu'il faut hésiter à s'en remettre uniquement à l'élément matériel dans l'examen des questions des sexes.

Introduction

This paper treats gender as a meaningful element of human cognition and interaction. The approach that it espouses has come to be called "interpretive," in that it seeks to interpret the meaning of gender, rather than to merely explain its function (Geertz 1973; Rabinow and Sullivan 1979, 1987; Beaudry 1989; Beaudry, Cook, and Mrozowski 1991). I argue that historical archaeologists are in an ideal position to study meaning. Using smoking behavior as an example, I will show that the documentary record provides us with detailed evidence of the past meanings of behavior and its associated artifacts, and that meaning and materials may be combined to

interpret the archaeological record. I will also assess the prospects for the incorporation of gender as a central element of historical archaeology.

Gender, Action, and Power

To begin, we need to settle on at least a working definition of gender, and to identify some of the relevant issues. I want to focus also on what gender does, because it is in operation and action, rather than in stasis, that gender has meaning.

Gender is a social, rather than an anatomical phenomenon, and a distinction must be made between the physical reality of sexual difference and the social reality of gender. The

substantial anatomical and physiological differences between men and women leave a strong temptation to take them as a baseline for social differences (Wylie 1990: 40). The potential for sexism in this approach should be clear, but even among feminists, the degree of influence that biology has on society has been a subject of considerable debate (Rosaldo 1987: 299–300). The perception and conceptualization of physical or “sexual” differences is, however, culturally constructed, and those cultural constructs are “gender.”

Power is a primary issue in gender studies (e.g., Brittan 1989). Gender figures prominently in issues of power, but it shares that distinction with other cultural constructs, notably social class and ethnicity. While we can separate domains of culture for ease and focus of analysis, the power relationships that make up society seldom if ever stand alone as motives for behavior. Ignoring the role of class and ethnicity in gender relations leads to serious problems of agency. We cannot assume that gender is monolithic, that all women (or men) share (or shared) common goals or had interests in common (Mascia-Lees, Sharpe, and Cohen 1989: 22–23). The complex interrelationship of gender, class, and ethnicity places all three at the center of modern Western society.

Gender shares a crucial aspect of power relations with class and ethnicity. One of the most enduring and amazing attributes of power is that in one form or another it is omnipresent. Where there seems to be powerlessness or even oppression, there is nearly always empowerment somewhere within or around it, as the events of the last decade in Eastern Europe and Southern Africa dramatically emphasize. Culture is identity, self-expression, and empowerment, and these are constantly communicated, adapted, re-expressed, and changed through social interaction. Historians and archaeologists share the problem of trying to recover, describe, and interpret forms of power and agency that have changed or vanished but that existed in the past. As Henry Glassie reminds us (1982: 86), everyone had power somewhere, in some aspect of their existence, and not to look for that power is to do a grave injustice to the

people whom we study, even at the distance of centuries:

Society is not peaked like a pyramid or layered like a cake. It is composed of communities simultaneously occupying space and time at the same human level . . . All seem reasonable from within, strange from without, silent at a distance. The way to study people is not from the top down or the bottom up, but from the inside out, from the place where people are articulate to the place where they are not, from the place where they are in control of their destinies to the place where they are not.

The proper place to begin looking at gender (or, for that matter, class or ethnicity) may not be with political or intellectual life, where power and powerlessness are often institutionalized, but with everyday life, where everyone is empowered in some way through social interaction (Vaneigem 1983; de Certeau 1984; Lefebvre 1987). The nature of the archaeological record, especially its inclusiveness, leaves us in a unique position to see and study the “everyday” manifestations of power.

Historians enter past communities through documents that they have left, prehistorians through material remains. As historical archaeologists, we have the responsibility to do both, as well as the advantage of powerful inference from multiple data sources. Unfortunately, traditional archaeological theory may be of limited utility to historical archaeologists in their attempts to link documents and excavated remains. Much of archaeological theory might better be described as the “theory of prehistory,” concerned as it is with understanding the past *without* recourse to documents or ethnographic research. In an article on the expansion of archaeological inference, Patty Jo Watson stated that:

It has not escaped the notice of processualists, and others who are not convinced by the symbolic-structuralist postprocessualists, that virtually all of their published work so far has been within or has relied heavily upon ethnographic and historical data (e.g., Leone and Potter 1988) leaving the question of relevance for prehistoric archaeology ambiguous (1990: 615–616).

Historical archaeologists, who not only wish to, but can and must, use documents as a major source of information, have noticed this as well, and have not been slow to explore issues of meaning at the interface of the historical and archaeological records. A number of journal articles and essays in edited volumes by Leone and Potter (1988), Little and Shackel (1992), and Yentsch and Beaudry (1992) take full advantage of the documentary record (occasionally utilizing symbolic-interactionist, structuralist, or post-processual approaches).

Positivist archaeologists sought to explain the past in an expressly objective fashion (Kelley and Hanen 1988: 116). Recent trends in cultural anthropology and other social sciences have questioned whether objectivity is useful (or even possible) in the study of people, who are subjective beings (Marcus and Fischer 1986: 20; Kelley and Hanen 1988: 162; Fabian 1994). Objectivity in the social sciences lends itself to objectification, which has led to the labeling of certain categories of people as "others." The similarity of this facet of the post-modern critique to feminist critiques of the notion of the woman as "other" has not gone unnoticed (e.g., Rosaldo 1987; Mascia-Lees, Sharpe, and Cohen 1989; Flax 1989; Hawkesworth 1994). If gender is a social and cultural construct characterized by "irreducibly symbolic and ideational components" (Wylie 1990: 36), that is, if it is subjective and made invisible or difficult to grasp by methodologies that favor objectivity, then we may have to adopt frameworks of analysis that can account for the subjective aspects of daily life, where gender appears most clearly. Historical archaeology, with its access to meaning through the documentary record, is ideally situated to accomplish this.

Issues of Meaning

The approach to the relationship between written culture and material culture that seems most appropriate to the concerns and issues that I've mentioned is an interpretive approach that focuses on the meanings of things. While we create and manipulate artifacts for what may seem to be practical, physical, or mundane ends, they have meaning to us, and they communicate meanings to others.

This happy circumstance makes modern, urban life bearable and sometimes amusing, and its implications for the study of the past are far-reaching. First, much of the discourse surrounding material culture in the documentary record centers on the meanings that people in the past attached to the things that they used. More important, nearly everything that we dig up, even the dirt, once meant something, and if we can get inside those meanings, we can interpret them in the present and use them to interpret the archaeological record. A critical approach must be applied to the documentary record to reveal past meanings, just as one must be applied to inferences from the archaeological record.

To return to gender, we need to remember that there are two primary constellations of gender-based meanings. The subculture of one gender may be seen in relation to, in opposition to, or in resistance to others, but they can never be seen in isolation from one another. If, as with class and ethnicity, gender is realized in the context of actual interaction between real people (Thompson 1963: 9-10; Nash 1989), then an inclusive approach is necessary.

A major shortcoming of past research in historical archaeology is that past lifeways, even past foodways, have often been approached as undifferentiated amalgams, in which the sexes of the actors were seen as irrelevant, and gender was thus simply not seen. While prehistorians may encounter legitimate difficulties in distinguishing gender in the archaeological record, the failure of historical archaeologists to do so has been largely because they have failed to see the potential value of gender-based analyses to discussions of past lifeways. Recent and notable exceptions include the work of Anne Yentsch, Diana Wall, and David Burley, all of whom have taken interpretive approaches to ceramic analysis that have emphasized gender. Yentsch (1991) relies primarily on documentary evidence of past ceramic use to infer gender-based classification systems used the past. Wall (1991) and Burley (1989) apply approaches to ceramic use that focus on class and ethnicity, respectively. In analyzing actual site assemblages with gender in mind, however, each has produced powerful analyses that demonstrate the interpenetration of

gender and other basic distinctions that operate in society.

Another approach to gender might be called the "index artifact" method of analysis. It consists of isolating (as much as possible) a social group, usually based on class or ethnicity, and identifying for analysis a material correlate of their presence. Such analyses, when they are based on documentary research that situates material culture in contexts of past social action, may provide considerable insight. If the goal of the exercise is merely to identify, rather than to interpret the indices of presence and absence of a group, then little may be gained, and much of value may be obscured or even lost. This is especially so in the case of gender, for while archaeological contexts, sites, and features are often produced by members of a single social class or ethnic group, they seldom reflect the activities of people of a single gender. Each seasonal resource extraction site that we excavate, each fishing settlement, logging or construction camp, each military encampment or fort, bordello or boardinghouse, presents an undeniable temptation to isolate "gender." The ability to distinguish between the activities and material presence of men and women is important. But very few truly single-sex sites exist. Predominantly single-sex sites, which are more common, do provide an entry point to gender, but most such sites result in large part from power relationships that are at least as relevant to class or ethnic isolation and exploitation as they are to gender. We need to know whether the differences that we are seeing between predominantly single-sex sites and more common site types are the result of gender relationships, or whether they simply reflect differences in household composition that are forced by other factors.

Smoking Symbols

The best way to demonstrate the power of an interpretive approach to reveal useful information on past genders is to examine the articulation of meanings, behaviors, and material culture in a small domain of past behavior. Excavations at a boardinghouse and tenement occupied by workers at the Boott Cotton Mills

in Lowell, Massachusetts, provided opportunities for research into a broad range of cultural phenomena from the late 19th to the early 20th centuries. Excavation and analysis were conducted by Boston University's Center for Archaeological Studies under the direction of Dr. Mary Beaudry and Dr. Stephen Mrozowski, and funded by the National Park Service (Beaudry and Mrozowski 1987a, 1987b, 1989). Analyses included the architectural context of the site (Clancey 1989), the foodways (Landon 1989), and social structures of the households that occupied the site (Bond 1987). Additional analyses of material recovered from the excavations focused on ceramics (Dutton 1989), beverage containers (Bond 1989), clothing remains and personal items (Ziesing 1989), and tobacco related artifacts (Cook 1989a, 1989b).

A total of 463 tobacco-related artifacts were recovered from the excavations at the Boott Mills boardinghouses (Cook 1989a). These included plastic and bone pipe mouthpieces, several ceramic cuspidor (spittoon) sherds, and a tobacconist's plastic pocket calendar (dating to 1895 and 1896), but by far the bulk of the collection consisted of white ball clay tobacco pipe fragments, including 183 stem fragments, 226 bowls and bowl fragments, and 48 mouthpieces. The rarity of tooth-wear on some types of mouthpieces, and the presence of tooth-wear and intentional modification such as whittling and grinding on 14 stem fragments (7 percent of the recovered stems), suggests intentional shortening of stems by breaking off the mouthpieces and portions of the stems prior to smoking (Cook 1989a: 193–198). Preference for shorter pipes on the part of working-class smokers is frequently mentioned in contemporary documents (Cook 1989b: 216–220).

Most of the marked pipe bowls (at least 35) that were recovered from the excavations were inexpensive "TD" pipes. The second largest group of marked bowls consisted of specimens with Irish cultural and political slogans. Two bowl fragments marked "HOME RULE" (FIG. 1), in reference to the Irish Home Rule movement which began in 1870 (Miller 1985: 440), were recovered. Two other bowls have the word "DHUDEEN" impressed on their backs (FIG. 2); *dhudeen* is the Irish Gaelic word for a short-

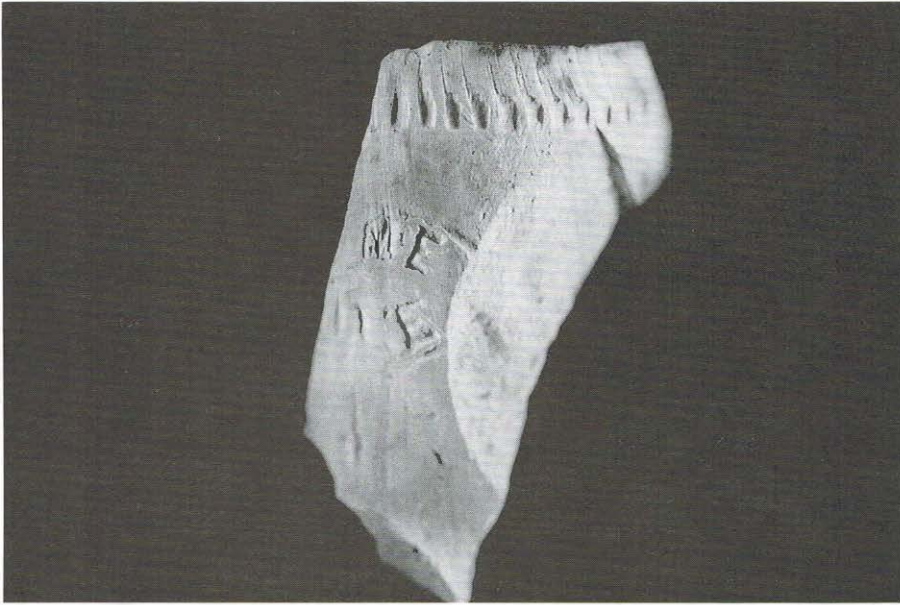


Figure 1. Pipe bowl fragment with impressed "HOME RULE" mark, recovered from the Boott Mills boardinghouses. Scale is in centimeters.



Figure 2. Pipe bowl with molded "DHUDEEN" mark, recovered from the Boott Mills boardinghouses. Scale is in centimeters.

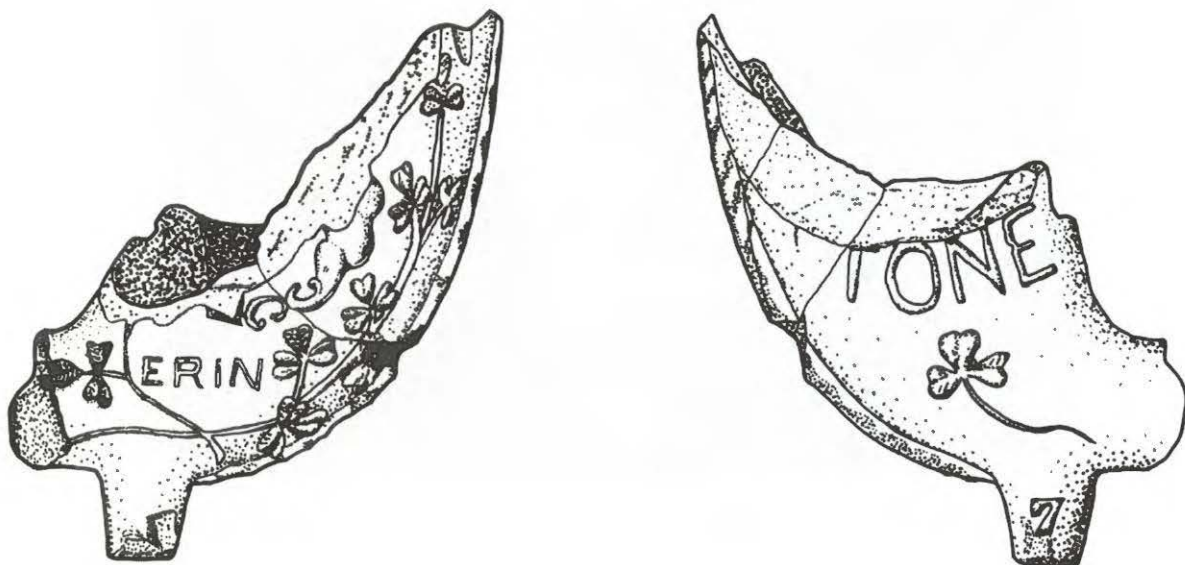


Figure 3. Pipe bowl embossed "ERIN," and "WOLFE TONE," recovered from the Boott Mills boardinghouses. Approximately twice actual size. (Drawing by Lauren J. Cook.)

stemmed clay pipe (Walker 1977: 14). A fragmentary bowl reads "ERIN" on its right side and "TONE" on its left side, and is decorated with shamrocks (FIG. 3). The left side of the complete example would have read "WOLFE/'98/TONE." This pipe was apparently manufactured to commemorate the centennial of the United Irish rising of 1798, of which Wolf Tone was a leader. These represent the only clear evidence of ethnicity among the tobacco-related materials from the site. These pipes, though most likely manufactured in Scotland or Canada, provided Irish immigrants with one means of self-expression on the political issues facing their homeland; Irish-American communities also provided essential funds for political activities in Ireland, particularly in the late 19th century. The presence of these artifacts indicates not merely that some members of the boardinghouse and

tenement households were Irish in origin, but that they consciously identified themselves as such.

The documentary analysis of tobacco use began with on the textual analysis of accounts of smoking behavior, focusing on examining meaningful behavior in the northeastern United States and the British Isles between 1830 and 1925. The analysis was directed primarily at class and ethnicity, with gender in a secondary role. Considerable evidence was gathered on the relationships among class, ethnicity, and tobacco use; and the white clay pipes recovered from the excavations were interpreted in light of the social meanings that were delineated from the documents (Cook 1989b).

As the study progressed, gender came to occupy a greater role, because of the interesting patterns that began to emerge from the

historical record. Popular cultural beliefs about gender and tobacco use proved to be a blend of fact and misconception. About 20 years ago, a tobacco company produced a series of advertisements directed at women. These ads, which can be described only as insulting, contrasted attitudes towards women smoking, in private and in public, in the 1890s and the 1970s, and closed by assuring bizarrely dressed models that they had come "a long way, Baby," a statement that contained at least the germ of a contradiction. After a few years the tobacco company moved on to tennis tournaments, but the message was clear and went directly into popular consciousness: women did not smoke tobacco until some time in the 1890s and then were subject to arrest or physical violence from men if they tried to do so. The impression that the right to smoke was one of the goals of suffragism, largely because smoking was associated with suffragists in several of the ads, also thrives in the popular imagination.

In reality, until some point before the middle of the 19th century, women apparently smoked without fear of persecution, legal or otherwise; the wives of Andrew Jackson and Zachary Taylor were reportedly pipe smokers (Hodgkin 1909; Anonymous 1909; Heimann 1960: 90). In fact, skeletons of women recovered from a colonial Quaker Cemetery in Newport, Rhode Island, showed evidence of wear on the teeth that may have resulted from years of smoking clay pipes (Angel 1979). During the 1850s some women, particularly middle- and upper-class women living in the urbanized northeast, were increasingly discouraged from smoking in public, or admitting that they smoked in private. Interestingly, men were also discouraged from smoking "in public," which is to say either on the street or in any place where smoking might offend women (Gould 1886-1887). Victorian standards held that:

A gentleman should as soon be seen eating his dinner in the public streets as smoking a segar. Both are proper in their places; and both may become in some situations worse than ridiculous. (Anonymous 1835: 134)

These rules were often ignored by the working classes, and in fact working-class men and women in Britain and America regularly smoked, and otherwise misbehaved in public, bringing down the scorn of middle- and upper-class writers (Rosenzweig 1983). Working-class smokers continued to prefer smoking short clay pipes, known as "cutties," long after middle- and upper-class men shifted first to the long-stemmed churchwarden in the 1780s and then to the brier pipe and cigar after 1850. Working-class women, especially the Irish, were often portrayed as smoking clay pipes during the 19th century. For some reason, Irish women street vendors were particularly liable to be portrayed in this fashion (Sante 1991: 63). Some working-class women appear to have shifted to cigarettes after the turn of the century, following the trend among upper-class women.

Outside of the northeast, strictures on public smoking often did not apply at all. In the rural south, men could smoke on trains without worrying about annoying women, who throughout the period in question were likely to be dipping snuff in the presence of men or even smoking pipes (Dennett 1965: 96, 117; Hunting 1889-1890: 220). In California, where the hispanic tradition was strong, women could smoke cigars, as they did in Central and South America, as late as the 1890s. "Young Ladies' Cigars" were sold in Sacramento, with brand names such as "Smiles," "Sweet Lips," "Pansy Blossoms," that leave no doubt that they were intended for women (Weinstock and Lubin Co. 1891). The historical evidence indicates that rural and working-class women, and women outside of the Northeast, were able to smoke as they wished, without much interference.

During the 1890s, middle-class British women broke with the Victorian tradition and began to smoke in public without encountering overt resistance. This sometimes occasioned confusion among American visitors. In 1906, Elizabeth Biddle, an American living in London, went to lunch with an American man who had just arrived in the city. Shortly after entering a restaurant, he suddenly leapt up and stormed out, apologizing to his bewildered companion for choosing such a disreputable

utable eating place. He had seen a young man and woman, with an older woman, smoking at a neighboring table and considered it to be quite forward behavior in public. Biddle herself had never seen a woman smoke until she arrived in London in the mid 1890s and found the sight unnerving (Biddle 1906).

The transition to public smoking took about a decade to cross the Atlantic, and when it did it was briefly contested. Following prevalent custom in Europe and Britain, young upper-class women at Newport began to smoke at dinner parties during the summer of 1907 (*New York Times*, 3 May 1908: 11). After the summer season, some women brought the practice back to New York with them. Several distinguished New York restaurants permitted women to smoke on New Year's Eve, 1907, and simply continued to allow them to do so. At least one of the restaurants soon changed its policy, again forbidding women to smoke (*New York Times*, 2 January 1908: 3; 10 January 1908: 2).

By this time, smoking had become a political issue in New York. On January 21st, 1908, City Alderman Timothy "Little Tim" Sullivan succeeded in passing an ordinance making it illegal for women to smoke in public places, defined as hotels, restaurants, and other "places of public resort," and set fines of between \$5 and \$25 for the managers of such establishments that allowed women to smoke on their premises (*New York Times*, 21 January 1908: 1; 22 January 1908: 4). There were questions about the law's legality, and accusations that Sullivan was seeking revenge on one of the offending restaurants, which had denied him a reservation on New Year's Eve (*New York Times*, 21 January 1908: 1; 22 January 1908: 4; 4 February 1908: 1).

The law was described by the *Times* as "ridiculous" and "utterly absurd," but the editors appear to have been opposed to "Little Tim" Sullivan no matter what he did. They considered women supporters of the law to be "misguided," and noted the receipt of "indignant letters" from "more thoughtful sisters" (*New York Times*, 24 January 1908: 6). Even women who did not smoke objected to what was clearly a discriminatory law. As one woman wrote:

The anti-smoking law just passed affects comparatively few women, but the principle underlying it is humiliating to every self-respecting woman, and is an insult to all. Here we have a Bowery politician in his native atmosphere, the Bowery saloon and all it represents, vice in all forms unveiled, originating arbitrary laws for one-half of New York's citizens, as though they were slaves and incompetents, without for one moment thinking it necessary to consult their wishes or opinions on the matter (Mack 1908).

Within two weeks of its passage, the "Sullivan Law," as it was known, was set aside by the mayor, who felt that it went beyond the Aldermen's authority (*New York Times*, 4 February 1908: 1).

There was one arrest reported under the Sullivan Law. In the wee hours of January 23, a patrolman arrested 29-year-old Katie Mulcahy for lighting a cigarette on the street in the Bowery, in "Little Tim's" district. When she was brought before the night court magistrate, she refused to give her address or to pay a \$5 fine, telling the judge, "I've as much right to smoke as you have. I've never heard of this new law, and I don't want to hear about it. No man shall dictate to me." She was led to a cell, still carrying her cigarettes (*New York Times*, 23 January 1908: 1).

The repeal of the Sullivan Law did not resolve the controversy. The members of several women's clubs had supported the law, although some of their members admitted to being private smokers (*New York Times*, 10 January 1908: 2; 23 January 1908: 4). In March, a group of conservative Newport socialites discussed taking a stand against smoking at dinner parties, and were supported by a *Times* editorial (*New York Times*, 3 May 1908: 11; 5 May 1908: 6). Although the European custom won out, there was still resistance. As late as 1940, Emily Post (1940: 37) observed that "a woman does not yet smoke on the street." American troops stationed in Britain during the Second World War were sometimes shocked to find "respectable" women smoking in public (Kennett 1987: 123).

What did the complex of rules that surrounded tobacco use in the northeast and in Britain mean? Clearly, upper- and middle-

class smoking behavior was related to the regulation of gender relations. Much of the behavior had the effect of preventing women from coming into contact with tobacco smoke, to which no less an authority than Leo Tolstoy attributed a loss of purity and innocence:

There is a certain well-defined, undeniable interdependence between smoking and the need to silence one's conscience, and smoking does undoubtedly produce that effect When do boys begin to smoke? Almost invariably when they have lost the innocence of childhood Why is it that among the female sex the women who lead blameless, regular lives are the least addicted to smoking? Why do courtesans and the insane all smoke without exception? (Tolstoy 1891: 179)

This is a somewhat pharmacological approach to virtue. Much more than the smoke itself, it was the accompanying behavior that was of concern. Smoking had been constructed, largely by men, as a social activity that carried connotations of places set aside for men—smoking cars, saloons and clubrooms—and the behaviors that took place there. If the male world was coarse, and tobacco smoke was a symbol of masculinity, then it is hardly surprising that conservative social groups, politicians, and individuals felt that women should be protected from it.

Women who smoked openly were seen as making strong statements about sexuality. Elizabeth Biddle's visitor was surprised by the staid dress of the women smokers in the London restaurant. "All thoroughly respectable looking, no make-up. In fact, I thought the women rather dowdy in their dress." He clearly had expected something else. An American woman friend of Biddle's confessed to smoking in private, when she felt "real devilish" (Biddle 1906). One finds references to "promiscuous smoking," which is to say unmarried women smoking in the presence of men, or married women smoking with men other than their husbands, and some writers attempted to link smoking with infidelity (*New York Times*, 12 January 1908: 2; 5 May 1908: 6). Public smoking, or even displaying visible evidence of being a smoker, was apparently a way in which women could signal sexual

availability to men. In the highly "miniaturized" world of Victorian appearances, a man might interpret a "slight discoloration of the teeth" as a sign of sexuality (Sennett 1978: 166). To return to Katie Mulcahy, the fact that she was an unaccompanied young woman on a Bowery streetcorner at 1:20 a.m. may have had as much to do with her arrest as did the cigarette that she was smoking.

The public smoking issue became politically charged by the passage of the Sullivan Law. The right to smoke was not itself, however, a suffragist concern, though the issue brought forward the arbitrary nature of gender relations. Several factors lay behind the desire of women to be able to smoke in public. One was undoubtedly the desire to indulge an addictive habit without hindrance. Another was the breakdown of Victorian conceptions of gender and sexuality. In the 1890s, women began wearing makeup, silk petticoats, and marcelled hair, while drab colors and physically restrictive garments such as the bustle and later the corset went out of fashion (Sennett 1978: 183–190). Women's clubs, while essentially conservative on issues such as smoking, had by their very existence begun to challenge traditional notions of women's "sphere" (Smith-Rosenberg 1985: 173–175; Filene 1986: 16–18). The agitation for the right to smoke in public was an outgrowth of the emergence of the "New Woman," a middle-class shift in gender relations and perceptions of sexuality that continued through the 1920s, more than it had to do with any direct political concerns (Smith-Rosenberg 1985: 176–178; Filene 1986: 19).

So much for the native-born middle and upper classes. How did working-class men and women and women of different ethnic groups view smoking? The answer is unclear, although we know that working-class women smoked and dipped snuff, and working-class men regularly smoked in the presence of women. While middle- and upper-class women favored cigarettes, some women, especially older African-American and Irish women, were known to smoke clay pipes (as were young female art students) (Hunting 1889–1890: 220–222). The practice is amply demonstrated by graphic evidence for urban areas in Britain and the United States. Several

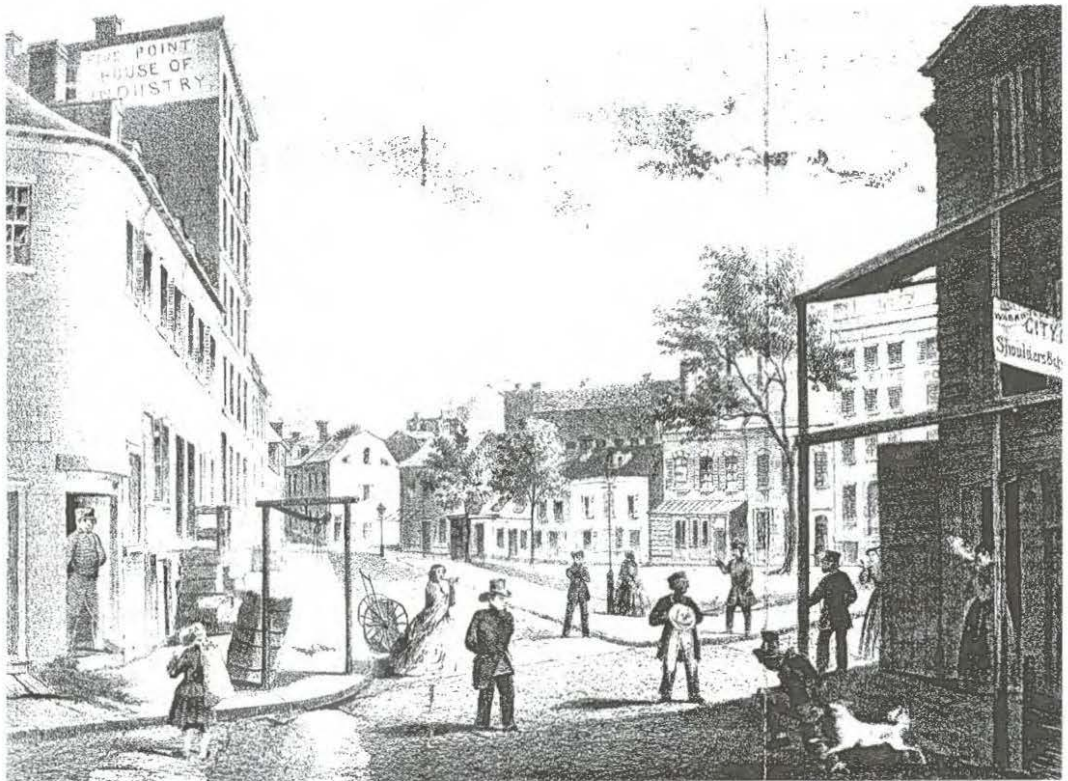


Figure 4. Five Points in 1859, view taken from the corner of Worth and Little Water Street. From *Valentine's Manual*. (Valentine 1860, opp. p. 396.)

examples should suffice. Figure 4 is a lithograph depicting the Five Points neighborhood in New York City in 1859. The Five Points was the prototypical American slum, inhabited by Irish immigrants, African Americans, and native-born working-class residents between the 1820s and the 1880s. Note that three of the five women visible in this image—the woman in the doorway on the right, the woman coming around the corner to her left, and the woman crossing Worth Street in the center—are smoking pipes. It is impossible to tell whether the other two females (the young girl on the left and the woman in the middle distance) are smoking, as their faces are not visible. The artist clearly intended to indicate that the smokers were Irish and may have intended to suggest that they were prostitutes, as well. Figure 5 shows a squatter community in New York City, in the area that is now Central Park,

in 1869. The seated woman in the left foreground, who is clearly supposed to be Irish, is smoking a short-stemmed clay pipe. In this image, the artist uses the dress, posture, and actions of these women as a contrast to those of the two well-dressed bourgeois women walking by them on the sidewalk.

How is gender visible in the archaeological record of tobacco smoking? For the Lowell pipe assemblage we have evidence for social class in the overall context of the site and in the intentional shortening of pipe stems, and we have clear evidence about the ethnicity of at least some of the smokers, but there is nothing that tells us whether these pipes were smoked by men or women! At the time that the greater part of the assemblage was produced (and I mean manufactured here, as well as deposited) the Boott Mills boardinghouses had been converted to tenements occupied by

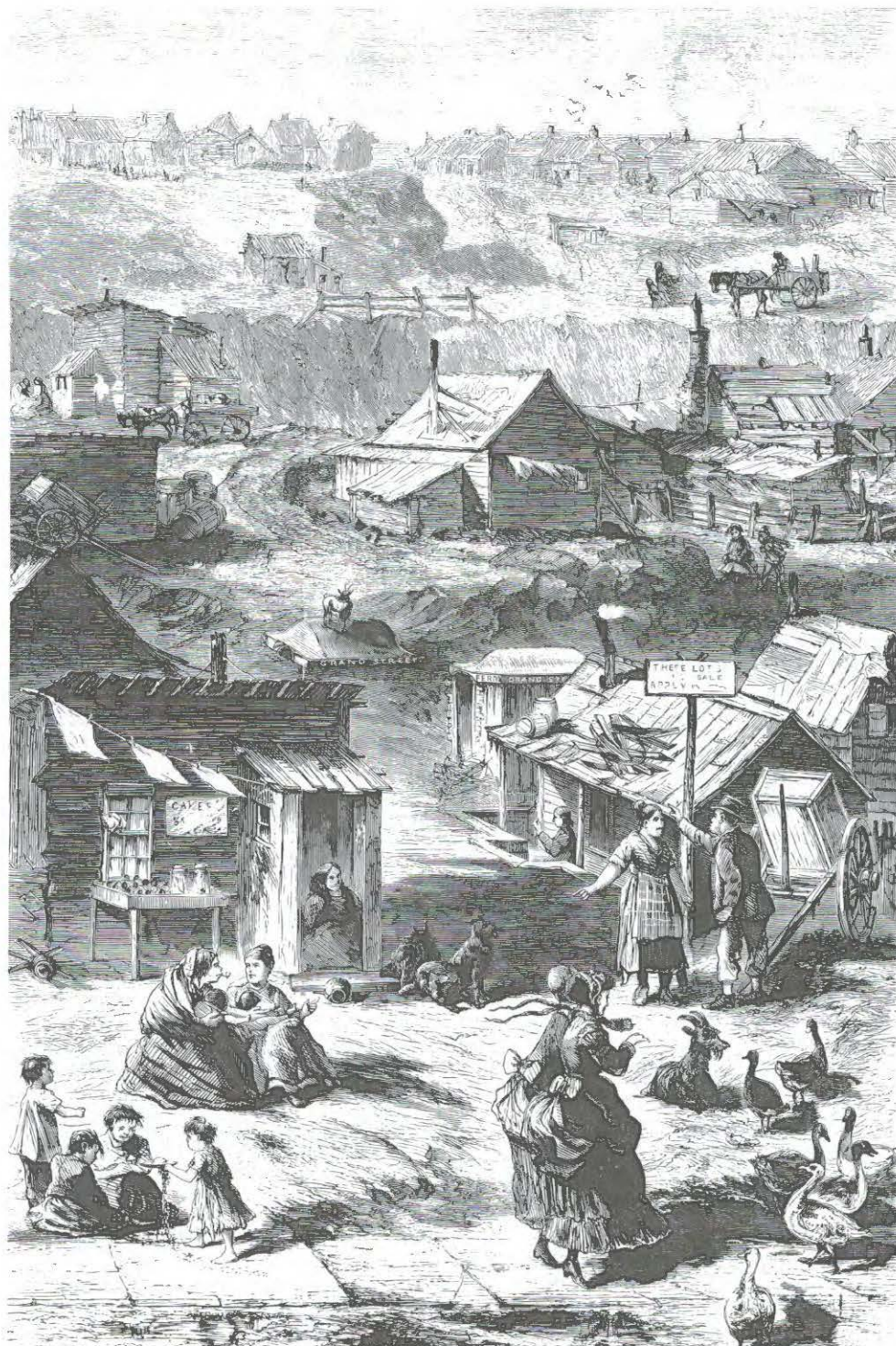


Figure 5. D. E. Wyand, *Squatters*. From *Harper's Weekly*, June 26, 1869. (Reproduced in Grafton 1977: 55.)

families—men and women. Given the class and ethnic affiliations of the site's occupants, it is likely that both men and women used the clay pipes that were recovered.

How does an understanding of the meaning of women's smoking behavior assist us in interpreting the archaeological record of gender? Detailed research on the meaning of smoking behavior, research that takes gender, class, and ethnicity into account, allows us to say that women as well as men could have used certain artifacts. Not only has this interpretive approach "made women visible," in that limited sense, but it has also done so by demanding that we look at Late Victorian women not as a monolithic group, but as a group cross-cut and divided by class and ethnic affiliations.

Is an "archaeology of gender" possible in historical archaeology? If gender is considered as a domain of meaningful behavior accessible through both the documentary and material records, then the answer can only be yes. Is it desirable? If the idea is to isolate gender from other social categories, so that hypotheses may be more easily proposed and discarded, then its usefulness will be limited. By presenting gender as a sole motive for action, such an approach could actually be counterproductive, blinding us to the important connections that link gender to other social constructs. Class and ethnicity are as powerful as gender in the transaction of meanings and actions, and as necessary as gender in interpreting the archaeological record. If we had not paid attention to class and ethnicity in tobacco use, but had assumed a hegemony of the middle-class practices described in the sources, we could have concluded that as women smoked cigarettes, and men pipes and cigars, the pipes recovered at the Boott Mill boardinghouses were the result of exclusively male activities. It serves little purpose to make women (or for that matter, men) visible unless we can see and study their diversity.

Interpretive approaches can bring gender forward by centering on subjective meanings, through which gender becomes visible. Historical archaeologists, by adopting such approaches, can link those meanings with the material world, offering a multi-dimensional approach to past culture that incorporates

gender, class, and ethnicity. When we do that, then an archaeology of gender will be both interesting and useful.

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